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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an interagency collaboration model designed to improve collaboration between residential programs and special education teachers involved with students residing in a community-based program. It uses the individualized educational program (IEP) process to provide a mechanism for transfer and generalization of goals between programs. The interagency collaboration concept is equated with consultancy models from other occupations and philosophical orientations, including clinical, mental health, education and training, and behavioral. The model comprises five steps: (1) scheduling contact and regular communication between school personnel and parents or residential staff; (2) establishing a positive working relationship among all those professionals providing services; (3) establishing goals which require each professional to identify and prioritize instructional objectives and maintain consistent instructional methods across programs; (4) maintaining on-going communication through regular meetings, telephone conversations, or written correspondence regarding progress toward goals; and (5) conducting a regular review of program plans in order to evaluate data collected, identify additional problems or needs, and revise methods or goals accordingly. (VW)

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Title: "Taking the I.E.P. Home": A Model for Improved Collaboration between Residential and Educational Programs.

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Introduction

Since the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) in 1975 schools have been required to develop an individualized educational plan (IEP) for every handicapped child (prior to the provision of services). The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 also requires adult programs for the developmentally disabled and residential programs which receive federal or state funding to provide services to individuals with handicapping conditions, to develop some form of an individualized service plan prior to treatment being provided.

The individualized educational plan is a management tool designed to facilitate the instructional delivery of services to a student written by school personnel, the parents/residential staff, or an advocate for the student if the others are unavailable, and the student when appropriate. Ideally, instructional planning should result in effective and appropriate learner outcomes. However, if the progress of designated annual goals and their subsequent short term objectives are not reviewed frequently, the instructional benefits will be minimal (Hudson & Graham, 1978).

To determine if adequate progress is occurring a

collection system for gathering information on specific objectives over time must be developed (Edmonds, 1983). Usually a student's daily work products plus teacher observations (over time) are the means by which a student's progress on instructional objectives are measured. An alternate system involves the use of information collected by the parents/residential staff on short-term objectives. This ensures parents as active members in the educational process. Unfortunately, once the I.E.P. has been developed the parents or staff are isolated from the instructional process for various reasons. These include:

1. Limited contact with the school on a regular basis.
2. Previous negative experiences with the school.
3. Limited understanding of the educational milieu.

These factors only serve to alienate the parent as the teacher's most effective tool for transfer and generalization of skills. Educators must actively engage parents/residential staff as valued members of the instructional process throughout the year.

The purpose of this article is to present an interagency collaboration model that bridges the gap between educational and community residential programs, which allows for positive use of the I.E.P. as an

instructional method providing transfer and generalization of goals to both programs.

Carney (1984) found that parent participation leads to program effectiveness by providing additional information to educators regarding instructional planning, accelerated learning rate (Shearer & Shearer, 1978), and promotes generalization of skills. The National Committee for Citizens in Education (1981) annotated bibliography of 35 studies indicated that parent involvement is associated with gains in student achievement, and suggests that without legitimate parent involvement, schools will not reach their optimal potential.

Morgan and Rhode's (1983) survey of Special Education teachers found a negative attitude towards use of the I.E.P. existed five years after inception. Teachers commented that the I.E.P. was too demanding on their time and had insufficient support from school personnel to meet the regulations of the State Education Administration. Teachers also felt they could teach as effectively without the use of the I.E.P.

Research on the collaboration of services from residential and educational settings have not examined the effect parent involvement has on improved educational outcomes. Therefore, this article examines the need for

improved agency collaboration between residential and educational programs and their responsibilities to students.

Model for Collaboration

The interagency collaboration concept can be equated with the various consultancy models from other occupations and philosophical orientations. These include clinical, mental health, education and training, and behavioral (Bergan, 1979; Gallessich, 1982; Tombari & Davis, 1979).

Most consultant models and teacher preparation programs have a behavioral orientation (Cipani, 1985; Heron & Harris, 1982). These concentrate on problem areas occurring due to lack of training or experience, and limited interagency contact. However, Cipani's (1985) model of consultation incorporated a three-phase approach; a) developing consultation objectives, b) designing and implementing objectives, and c) implementing quality assurance. Cipani's approach is simple but still demonstrates an effective method for collaboration. This model also permits service providers flexibility while still maximizing their outcome with services.

The following model was designed to improve

collaboration between residential programs and special education teachers involved with students residing in a community based residential program. It is an example of what can be accomplished by professionals from different disciplines if focus of services is placed on consumers.

The model for interagency collaboration proposed within this article extends the program approach to the direct service level in an attempt to demonstrate that collaboration between service agencies should not only be initiated with agency agreements, but as well as the level that impacts the student/consumer most. It also demonstrates that individuals responsible for delivery of services can initiate and support collaborative efforts on a daily basis.

Figure 1 illustrates that both representative agencies view the delivery of services to consumers as a central focus, and subsequently the I.E.P. is utilized as an instrument of establishing mutually acceptable goals and methods for obtaining learner outcomes.

Professionals involved with this project first clarified their individual roles, responsibilities and needs regarding students/consumers and how their needs could be acommodated. Professionals must determine areas

INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

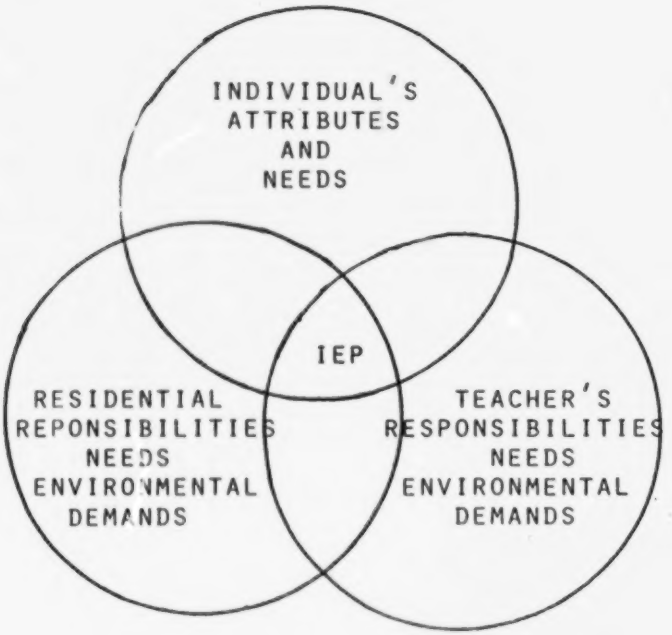

FIGURE 1. Combining agency responsibilities, needs, and environmental demands to strengthen the delivery of services for the individual through the use of the I.E.P.

of concern and priorities relative to the consumer and design plans for achieving the desired outcomes.

The five step approach of this model starts with scheduled contact and regular communication. Communication should be consistent and positive regardless of how minor the topic or even if it does not relate the goals you are interested with collecting data. Berliner & Cassanova (1985) found contact from school personnel to parents of low achieving students was usually negative, and related to behavior problems or attendance. Therefore, positive communication with parents about their child is helpful in removing the anxiety that may exist between educators and parents/residential staff. Future contact should be made to establish a schedule of times and/or dates to review student progress on a regular basis.

The second step requires establishing a positive working relationship with those professionals providing services to the consumer. The key to this positive rapport is to be aware of each disciplines needs and responsibilities and attempt to avoid conflict over professional responsibilities and priorities related to each discipline. The needs and responsibilities of all

those individuals involved should be discussed, with the remaining focus the consumers/students goals and individual needs.

The third step is to establish goals which require each professional involved to identify and prioritize goals and instructional objectives that possess consistent instructional methods that will be monitored during the year by each program.

The fourth step is on-going communication through either regular meetings, phone conversations, or written correspondance regarding the progress of goals. The need for effective communication that is supportive of those participating can not be overstated. In this model daily notebooks were used to relate information between parties involved.

The final step is regular review of program plans developed in order to evaluate the data collected and to revise any methods, goals, needs or additional problems that may occur that improve the learner outcomes and meet the instructional goals identified.

This model project and its steps outlined in this article are a brief overview of the elements necessary for improved interagency collaboration at the direct care level. However, these same steps can be instituted at

higher levels of agency contact with greater impact on service providers. This model project has been effective for residential staff and consumers of a suburban residential program for the past five years. It must be stated that following the steps of this model will not provide immediate results, for individual personalities and interdisciplinary involvement are critical to effective collaboration.

Communication, rapport, mutually identified goals, on-going communication and regular review are only as effective as the individuals participating. The I.E.P. process encourages and supports active participation from all members of the I.E.P. planning committee and serves as the technique for beginning collaboration on services for the individual.

The use of the I.E.P. as a central focus to provide services allows service providers to establish a network for developing collaboration on learner outcomes. If parents are involved as advocates, and facilitators of their son or daughter's education then we soon begin to improve the acquisition, generalization and performance with identified goals that enhance independence.

Discussion

Interagency collaboration is defined as a cooperative effort between two or more organizations for the purpose of assessing needs for planning, implementing, or evaluating services of handicapped individuals (NRP,1981). Interagency collaboration literature demonstrates the lack of concern agencies place on supporting such initiatives, and it is not surprising to find certain state and federal initiatives have even proposed expanding to fill gaps of services for children and adults with handicaps.

The pattern of recent legislation reflects the extent to which collaborative strategies have been developed. Recent exemplary programs have used phrases such as, "coordination of services", "interagency cooperation" and "comprehensive services" in an attempt to accommodate for the growing demands on service providers (Elder, 1980). Service systems have continued to specialize growing independently but not integrally. The schism of self-maturing agencies has few or no interrelationships-especially at the point of service delivery (Margeat, Schmidt, 1980).

Due to these prevelant issues service systems continue to reflect a debilitating consequency toward

current practices. Audette (1980) found four issues that confound collaboration issues; a) There are still many gaps in the service system where individuals with handicaps fail to meet eligibility criteria; b) There are still many instances in which no services are available for certain categories of children/adults with handicaps (particularly adolescents); c) There are many instances where services are available but limited due to program appropriations, services are highly differentiated by an agency, so interagency services or comprehensive services are rare; and d) The complaints that government is wasting the taxpayers money by duplicating services across agencies. Audette (1980) stressed the need for interagency collaboration so programs providing services are comprehensive and nonduplicative. Yet, the past decade has seen an increase of services to fill gaps that occur in the existing system.

If collaboration is to occur between service agencies such as residential and educational programs, the independent agency concept, along with protectionist attitudes regarding professional responsibilities must be removed. It has been shown (PAR, 1981) that the failure of teachers to communicate with parents has resulted in

limited learner outcomes. Also important to the ideal of collaboration is the fact that residential program staff often serve as the appointed advocate for a child and should be viewed as active members of the collaboration process.

Interagency collaboration at the level of working together on a I.E.P. goal is essential to eliminating the separation that has been prevalent with service agencies providing assistance to handicapped individuals over the past decade. The use of the I.E.P. for encouraging collaboration is a positive step for teachers, residential staff, and parents to consider. Focusing on outcomes and goals of the I.E.P. allows professionals to engage in a collaborative effort that provides integrated services for students. It must be emphasized that the intent of the I.E.P. is as an instructional plan which provides effective habilitation from a diverse number of professionals involved with the consumer. The collaboration of these habilitative services should direct professionals towards using the Individualized Education Plan as the best method available for achieving this goal.

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